Susan Ferranti

Teaching Philosophy

**A Foundation of Communication Skills using Technology**

I became an English teacher not because I wanted to impart my love for literature on students, but because I truly believe that good communication skills are the foundation for anything that students will pursue. Key components in my ELA classes are:

* Scaffold literature with current events, audio, video and related texts so that students make connections across subjects and time periods
* Incorporate technology through video clips, publishing classwork online and using the SMART board
* Project based curriculum emphasizes the writing process:
  + Poetry becomes part of an electronic portfolio
  + Persuasive essays used as material for a debate on whether George was justified in the end of Of Mice and Men
  + Do Now writing prompts are the basis for narrative essays or memoirs

**Building Excellent Relationships with Students**

One professor at UMass Boston answered most every question by saying, "First of all, know your students." While it became somewhat of a joke, it was also the most salient point my graduate work in education. There is never just one way to do things in a classroom - it is all contextual and circumstantial, and whether you like it or not, while teaching in high school, you’re not just the teacher.  You’re the mother, father, friend, and counselor all wrapped into one. In order for students to succeed to their potential in our classrooms, we must address their other needs as well. Some ways that I build relationships with my students include:

* Greet students at the door at the beginning of every class
* Chaperone all field trips possible in order to have common experiences with students outside of school.
* Consistently loan students books based on their interests
* Engage families so students realize that their teachers and families are working together to promote their success

**Create Classroom Community through Encouraging Mistakes**

Students should feel in charge of their own learning, and that the teacher is there to guide and provide feedback, rather than be the dominating voice in the room. Teachers need to promote the idea that making mistakes, and then learning from those mistakes, is an essential part of learning.  Mistakes should not "be viewed as revelations of inadequacy, but helpful contributions in the search for understanding" (Donovan & Donovan, 2005, p. 20). Some specific strategies:

* Understand the specific developmental needs of 11-14 year olds; they need positive reinforcement for successes, and continual discussion about their specific learning challenges, we can ingrain the belief that effort is important before high school.
* Vary lessons so all students can succeed:
  + Consistently offer creative assignments involving drawing, computer art, poetry, music
  + Intentional groupings so students learn from each other
  + Give students choices in questions they will answer or the format of the assignment to encourage students to reflect on their own strengths